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POEMS

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P O E M S

BY

ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

ἦν τι καὶ πάσχητε, πάσχειν τοῖς
σοφοῖς δοκῆσθε

L O N D O N

ELKIN MATHEWS AND

JOHN LANE

1893

LOAN STACK

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1893

TO MY FATHER

*O loved and honoured, truest, best
Of friends and fathers, mine though death
Divide us, mine through toil and rest,
Since first I drew uncertain breath,*

*There, where the desert bloomed with towers,
Subdued, replenished, starred with praise,
With memories of diviner hours,
When thou, through glad laborious days,*

*Didst nurse and kindle generous fires,
That, as the old earth forward runs,
May fit the sons of hero sires
To be the sires of hero sons.*

v

*From that grey choir, whose purer lines
Are fair above the humming town,
A western land of ports and mines,
The watered vale, the bleaker down,*

*Desired thee, welcomed as her own,
Till fateful voices, surely heard,
Constrained thee to an ancient throne,
A larger, more majestic word ;*

*What though the years grow loud and late,
Though spoiling hands seem overbold,
Though thunders of a troubled state
About Augustine's chair are rolled,*

*True sire, true son of Aaron's line,
Still, as the sacred burden grew,
'Mid pomp and policy divine,
A fonder, gentler father too.*

*I need your patient trust, I need
Your fond forgiving welcome ; hear
Your son who loves his childhood's creed
Because you loved it, made it dear.*

*For we have fared by hills and waves,
And paced by many a hallowed site,
And bent together over graves
That first estrange, and then unite :*

*So shall the Lord of Life, who sets
On faithful hearts His seal of fire,
Make music of our weak regrets,
And crown our impotent desire.*

ETON, April 1893.

P R E F A C E

THERE is a feverish tendency at the present day among writers, to be artist first, and man afterwards with such shreds of time as are left ; if a reputation is to be made, it cannot be made at leisure. Such was not the way of the old masters, the norma veterum. Æschylus had his bald pate broken by a dropped tortoise, as he sate in the sun. Sophocles as a stripling danced in processions, and was a general in middle age. Dante was a violent political schemer. Shakespeare, when he had realised a competence, wrote no more than he was obliged : he planted his wand and it became a mulberry tree : he drowned his book in the reedy Avon : Dr. Johnson loved to stretch his legs and have his talk out : Byron, in his

PREFACE

coarse way, lived : Scott was a country gentleman : Mr. Stevenson takes a hand in Samoan politics.

Again, in these days, the critics sit in Parnassus itself, and adopt a sacerdotal tone of authority about literature which is both bewildering and saddening. Yet to make the candid avowal that any era is an era of criticism, is in itself a confession of decadence ; it is but an adorning of the sepulchres of the prophets ; and with a view to the future of the world, one rude experimentalist in the devising of an adequate creed is better than any number of well-dressed persons in search of a religion. Where criticism of literature directs our enraptured attention to great master-pieces, it is wholly valuable ; wherever it diverts our pleased notice to itself, and enthralls us only by its mastery of graceful expression, it is almost wholly pernicious. The poet Gray, who occasionally spoke out, said in one of his inimitable letters that to him the worst verse ever written was a better thing than the best criticism ever printed about it.

PREFACE

In sad rebellion against these overmastering tendencies, the author of these poems has tried, with his eye on life, to present certain aspects of men and nature that have come home to him with force in an uneventful and sheltered existence. The poems make no claim to be a coherent philosophy: they are merely an individual expression of a little share in the great inheritance of life.

Behind the burning questions of the day, which after all affect legislators and politicians and writers of articles and preachers more than the classes whom they claim to represent, which interest those who talk more than those who listen, there lies a large region of simple facts, and quiet experiences. The almond-tree blooms, the rook strides over the new-turned furrow, and the streams hurry through the meadows with a singular indifference to the promises of Socialism and the mysteries of Home Rule: there is a land in which we can always rest, so far as rest is possible in an over-populated community: and whatever may be the fate of political theories and

PREFACE

Mauthusian prophecies, life is very real to the ordinary man and duty very plain.

The author of these poems believes in Divine guidance even more than in human insight, in love even more than in truth, in men even more than in Man: if he has failed to indicate this, it is from his deficiency in the power of material expression, more than from any want of deep conviction.

A. C. B.

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N.B.—The poems distinguished by an asterisk are selected from a small volume, *Le Cahier Jaune*, privately printed in 1892.

FRITILLARIES

AY, he was dull and churlish, slow of speech
And diffident ; he had no piteous arts,
No tricks of sly imposture ;—but betrayed
The pride of rustic unaffectedness,
The sick disdain that frets a simple life,
Thrusting itself in unaccustomed haunts.
For now he plucked his faltering courage up,
And now the throng unnerved him ;—long he stood
In wistful indecision, holding out
His sorry packages of wizened flowers,
Ill tied with clumsy fingers, trebly rude ;

FRITILLARIES

Yet half ashamed to seem to recommend
Their sordid limpness ; shamefaced, with the air
Of some shy woodland creature that, ensnared
To make a show for gazers, is too proud
To win their welcome by caressing wiles,
Yet dumbly vexed at their indifference.

The summer day drew on ; the early mists
That hid the topmost branches of the lime,
And screened the parapets and pinnacles,
Melted beneath the morning ; the hot sun
Stared o'er the chimneys, and the dust was deep :
Then once again I saw him, as he stole
A furtive hand to break a crust of bread,
And ate ashamed—while still his sorry stock
Was undiminished ; so again I came
Upon him, when the sun was flaring hot,
And his poor wares were undiminished still.

FRITILLARIES

Then I was lost in pity, and drew near,
And asked him whence he came and what he
sold,
And he 'from Ensham, o'er the Oxford downs'—
(Muttering a score of undistinguished names)—
'Had walked all night, starting when twilight fell';
'And these,' I questioned, 'are fritillaries?'
'Snakeheads,' he answered, 'rare outlandish things,
For such as love them; saw them in a croft
That fringed an upland down, a spot remote
From roads and houses, all unvisited;—
Had thought that townsfolk cared for curious
things;
Himself he loved them, thought them magical;
Had now no work;—no fault of his;—the time
Was difficult, and there were hands enough
And mouths too many; so he brought them here;
Had thought he might have made a little by them.'

FRITILLARIES

All this and more in simple speech he told,
Wondering and pleased that one should hearken
to him.

I bent and fingered ; rare and curious things
Indeed ! no kinship theirs with homely flowers,
That bloom on gravelled hills, or in the waste,
Or in the tumbled pasture ;—withered, dry,
Faint-tinted, spotted like an ocelot's skin,
Streaked like the banded viper, with their lean
Sleek stalks ; uncanny, indeterminate ;
Left, like the wrack of some unmeasured flood,
From dim primeval flora, fronds that waved
And branched long since in solitary fens,
Spurned by the bear and ragged buffalo ;
Then,—when the blue-eyed tribes made head,
and pierced
The forest, pricked the waste and made a home,—

FRITILLARIES

Flared out, too wild to blossom 'neath the eyes
Of prying man ; expired in sick disdain,
Yet left some score of shameless progeny,
In secret woods, like those resisting hordes,
That driven to Cornwall's fretted promontories,
Or hid in far Menevia, skulked and writhed
In mountain fastness, spake a clumsy tongue,
And kept unheeding their untutored ways.

‘ Would I buy more ? ’ I would not : yet I gave
A coin, that made him stare and think me fool
Or foolish : then in gratitude he spoke,
Because I loved them, he would dig me roots,
And I should raise the strange unsightly things
Far from their own securer wilderness.

And so he did me reverence, and was gone
To ponder on the ways of city folk,

FRITILLARIES

To cast his wasted wrecks unsold away,
Then seek elate the inviolable depths
Of woodland, far sequestered villages,
Where never stranger comes from year to year,—
Since in the world is no fit place to dwell.

So dreams the poet, rises, breaks away
From his austere, unenvied reverie,
And strides toward the indifferent world, to learn
If he have power to move, to break their mirth,
To bid the laughter dwindle into sighs,
Or fill hard eyelids with absolving tears.

Strange growths he carries, children of dismay
And madness, echoes of the eternal voice
Half-heard through April woodlands, sound of
winds

FRITILLARIES

And bubbling streams, and dewy fancies pure
Pulled in dim thickets, when the upward rays
Gush from the intense rim of the hidden sun.

He proffers, but the world will none of these ;—
They clutch their toys, they strive for sensual bliss,
And few have leisure for the scent of Spring,
Save such as flying to the woodland, gain
Sharp sight through grief that tames the fevered
pulse,

Or such as walking swiftly, find old Death
Sit in a sheltered arbour by the road ;
And start from lean conventions, wrinkled fears,
To cast their eyes for once upon the stars.

And so the wistful poet is disowned,
Draws back into himself, and drowns his soul

FRITILLARIES

In some ethereal vision ; to the sea
He hears the streams grow larger, feels the day
Shine purer, though uncleanly voices call,
And though the funeral horns blow harsh and high,
He sees the smile upon the face of God.

SEEDS

ONE fell in the dull ground, and hopeless lay
Hearing the secret waters murmuring ;
Till his dark life was quickened by the spring,
And with soft hands he climbed to meet the day.

And one was winnowed in his nakedness,
And in the humming mill was bruised and rolled,
And indistinguishably bought and sold,
To feed the folk that toiled in heaviness.

The choice is ours : we know not which to ask ;
For either way is bounteous, either blest ;

SEEDS

To feed the frail, to give high hearts relief;
And each were well ; but oh, the matchless grief,
To fail and falter in the heavenly quest,
And miss meanwhile the homely humble task !

THE THISTLEDOWN

As through the summer land we sped,—

(The busy wheels rushed on,)—

I turned the tedious page, and read

The woes of Jill and John.

Oh for a breath of frosty breeze,

I sighed, for the chill sharp weather,

To arrest the languorous mood, and freeze

The melting soul together.

Over the soiled page, suddenly,

With pinions golden-brown,

Came drifting, drifting, delicate, shy,

An arrowy thistledown.

THE THISTLEDOWN

In the gust the flapping curtain beat ;
 It started, light as the fawn,
Stepping at dusk with dainty feet
 On the pine-girt mountain-lawn.
I closed the book with zealous care,
 I prisoned the fair frail thing,
That rode so free on wings of the air,
 Aimlessly wandering.
One glance I cast on the fleeting scene ;—
 (The turning wheels flew fast)—
A pasture, ridged with tumbled green ;—
 A spring through the rushes passed ;
'Twas here your merry kinsmen stood
 In glory self-decreed,
Bonny trespassers, fearless, rude,
 Close-packed with feathery seed.
There hung a wood, that wheeling showed
 A shade-flecked avenue,

THE THISTLEDOWN

Deep-rutted climbed the woodland road,
The castle towers looked through.
A grey high-shouldered church beside
The green downs, steep and tall,
With wind-swept pastures, terraced wide,
And blue sky over all.

Ten years ago ! and memory tossed
The tiny thought aside ;
I deemed that picture whelmed and lost,
In the dim years' shadowy tide ;
Again I turn the tedious page,
Alone in the sombre town,
And here lies prisoned, and wan with age,
The faded thistledown.
Out of the dark the visions swim,
The high downs terraced green,

THE THISTLEDOWN

The huddling church, the avenue dim,
The castle peers between.

I praise the cunning thought that lays
Her hoarded sweetness by,
And half surprised, half proud, betrays
Her hidden treasury ;
Darts through my soul a sudden fear,
A thought too dark to spell ;—
My heart, if all things are as clear
Recorded, is it well ?

IN THE PINEWOOD

BELOW the fields of splintered stones
That tumble from the mountain's head,—
(The wind across the cranny moans)—
Above the torrent's bed ;—
Amid the rushing milkwhite streams,
The rocking boulders buffet low ;
Yet from their mellow thunder seems
A deeper peace to grow ;
Among the strong leaves glossy green
The empurpled berry dully glows,
The juniper her thorny screen
About the hillock throws.

IN THE PINWOOD

The grey frog stares across the pool,
 With measured chant of tranquil bliss,
On trailing streamers balanced cool ;—
 His throat the ripples kiss :

My forest armies hither stream,
 The tall battalions thronging come,
Not panoplied in angry gleam,
 With thunder of the drum,
But silent, breathing scented breath,
 And through the dim green-tufted aisles,
(The hill-rose screens the stone beneath)
 The level sunlight smiles.

The straggler from the mounting troop
 Bears the fierce brunt of snow and wind,

IN THE PINWOOD

The dragged tassels start and droop

Over his tortured rind.

From bough to bough small titmice flit,

The pie, who flirts an upstart tail,

Screams harshly from the topmost spit,

And scolds the indifferent vale.

Where else the livelier forest glows

In indistinguishable green,

His duskier foliage sterner shows

The slender larch between.

The ruddy bark is ridged and torn,

And weathered black with volleying rain ;

Dry lichens fringe the withered horn,

And flaunt their rusty stain.

With writhing root he coils and clings,

And strains the boulder in his grip,

And binds a hundred trailing rings

Over the streamlet's lip.

IN THE PINEWOOD

He sees the moon unearthly still
Peer coldly o'er the ridges brown ;
He hears the thunder in the hill,
When ice-crag's topple down.

O strong and patient as the hills
About thee, smile thy rugged smile ;
Bear proudly thy encircling ills,
Befriend me for awhile !
Like thee, I would not estimate
The harshness of o'ermastering woes,
But brave the suns intemperate,
And every wind that blows.

BY THE GLACIER

CRAWL on, old ice-worm, from the solemn hills ;
Press deep thy burrowing snout among the
stones,

Mutter and murmur with thy turbid rills,
And crush the old Earth's bones ;

Gnaw, grind the patient cliffs with ravenous teeth,
The crumbling crag shall feed thy snaky spine,
The dim unfathomed caverns gape beneath,
Azure and crystalline.

From those high fields with dazzling whiteness
piled,
From crests too lofty for the eagle's wing,

BY THE GLACIER

By icy precipices, undefiled,
Thou creepest, wondrous thing.

We fear thee not, old monster ; see, we go
In pleasing awe to trace thy writhings vast ;
Soft laughter rings above thy crusted snow,
Light footsteps hurry past.

Haste thee, for thou art destined to decay,
High in the valley thy old scars are set ;
Dost thou take thought of thy diminished sway ?
What, art thou tyrannous yet ?

The high peaks crumble, topple to their fall,
The torrent whirls the boulder to the vale,
A thousand voices to surrender call ;—
And thou shalt not prevail.

BY THE GLACIER

Light, fairy hands, the noontide and the rain

Deface yon bristling horrors, one by one.

Daily they pass to feed the fertile plain,

And drink the steady sun.

BERRIES OF YEW

UNDERNEATH the down, with its vast limbs
sweeping

Southward, ever southward to the restless sea,
In a rounded hollow, desolately sleeping,
Dreaming solemn dreams, stands the grave
yew-tree.

When the heavy-headed corn is glad and glowing,
When the golden grass is waving on the slope,
Then my yew-tree wakes to dreams of fruitful
sowing,
Loads her silly branches and abides in hope.

Red and translucent, orb'd in soft completeness,
Hung like fairy lamps in the sombre shade ;

BERRIES OF YEW

Yet the merry-hearted thrush abhors the sickly
sweetness,

And the glutton sparrow flirts his wing, and
flees afraid.

Then, sick at heart, the ripe and ruddy burden
Spills its unregarded treasure underfoot.

No welcome from the world, no grateful guerdon,
Save a sheltered grave beneath the parent root.

Poor patient tree, that dost distil and cherish
By thy dark alchemy no gift of grace ;

We too are doomed to bear the fruits that perish,
Yet we have dreams of some diviner place.

Lord of sorry waste and impotent endeavour,
Raise us, embolden us to strive in vain ;

Surely far hence, hereafter, and for ever

We shall reap the harvest of our fruitless pain.

OUT OF WEAKNESS

To-DAY, as far as eye can see,
Or thought can multiply the sight,
In tangled croft, on upland lea,
A message flashed along the light
Has worked strange marvels underground,
And stirred a million sleeping cells,
The rose has hopes of being crowned ;
The foxglove dreams of purple bells ;

No tiny life that blindly strives,
But thinks the impulse all his own,
Nor dreams that countless other lives
Like him, are groping, each alone ;

OUT OF WEAKNESS

What dizzy sweetness, when the rain
Has wept her fill of laden showers,
To peep across the teeming plain,
Through miles of upward-springing flowers !

The brown seed bursts his armoured cap,
And slips a white-veined arm between,
White juicy stalks, a touch would snap,
And twisted horns of sleekest green
Now shift and turn from side to side,
And fevered drink the stealing rain,
As children fret at sermon-tide,
When roses kiss the leaded pane.

The tender, the resistless grace,
That stirs the hopes of sleeping flowers,
Could shake yon fortress to her base,
And splinter those imperial towers ;

OUT OF WEAKNESS

Concentred, bound, obedient,
The soul that lifts those dreaming lids
Could mock old Ramses' monument,
And pile a thousand pyramids.

OLD NESTS

THE angry sun engulphed apace
Is flaring in the watery west,
Swiftly the ragged vapours race,
Uneasy wanderers, craving rest.

As drowsy ring the muffled chimes,
The weary footsteps homeward go :
The phantom moon half-hearted climbs
Above the plough-lands, large and low.

In yonder hedgerow by the gate
There swings a sodden crumbling nest,
That lately held a living freight,
That bore a warm and brooding breast.

OLD NESTS

There woke to life with sweet surprise,
Where now the lingering leaf is hurled,
Young mouths that cried for food, young eyes
That opened on a merry world.

When the poor drudge that dumbly slept,
Awoke to pile the sordid fire,
Alert to view the world they leapt,
In ardent, innocent desire.

The parent thrush, with heart too glad
For aught but crooning tender things,
Had never leisure to be sad,
Nor yearned to stretch her tethered wings.

When that unwavering instinct wore
A sweeter, a diviner dress,
And nature for a moment bore
The aspect of unselfishness.

OLD NESTS

Unmindful of the sheltered days,
The devious brood abroad is flown ;
They linger in the accustomed ways,
To make a music of their own.

They pile new homes in croft and lane,
They follow where the summer goes,
And if they meet their sire again,
They greet as strangers, even foes.

The nest is down : the dream is o'er ;
Do we too love because we must ?
Or shall the fruit our passion bore,
Be quickened, when the heart is dust ?

THE CARRIER PIGEON

O'ER leagues of clustered houses, where
The long town flies its streamers black,
Aloft upon the smoky air,
Thou didst divine the homeward track ;
Then out o'er park and sandy heath
Thy chartered pinions bore thee well,
The indifferent world was spread beneath ;
How could we tell ?

Why didst thou stay thy wandering
That day within my fatal pine ?
The leaden hail that rent thy wing,
The fault, if fault there were, was mine.

THE CARRIER PIGEON

Thou didst pursue thy cherished trust,
With shattered plume and filmy eye,
Again I flung thee in the dust,
Only to die.

Indeed, indeed, I deemed thee one
Of that astute rapacious crew,
That pluck the blade before the sun
Is gracious, ere it drink the dew.
Beneath the beech thy fellows toil,
Grey specks upon the trampled floor
Of rusty gold, to gorge and spoil
The squirrel's store.

How couldst thou guess thy confidence
Would such unkindly welcome find ?
The folk that trained thy trustful sense,
God help me, were a gentler kind.

THE CARRIER PIGEON

Thou didst not crave for alien air,
No restless impulse bade thee roam,
Thy sweetest hope, thy fondest care
To hasten home.

The words that tied by gentle hands,
Beneath thy ready pinion lay,
I, sorrowing, loosed their careful bands ;
They passed a less ethereal way.
Lest wanton time should violate
Thy pious bones, thy tender frame,
I bade the holt commemorate
Thy nameless name.

Then ere I hid the piteous feet,—
Poor rosy feet !—I rent away
The ring that told thy customed beat,
The scant duration of thy day.

THE CARRIER PIGEON

Sleep well beneath the hanger's side,
So shalt thou be, through my regret,
As never duteous dove that died,
Remembered yet.

THE MOLE

Dig deeper yet, sir mole, in the patient ground,
Score not my sloping park
With starting turf uplifted, crumbling mound,
Old delver in the dark !

For thee no gin with iron shears is set,
To nip thy velvet hide ;
But tempt me not, or I shall pinch thee yet,
Seeing the world is wide.

I make no claim to ampler dignity,
Nor check the tiny scale,
We live our destined hour, nor when we die
Shall meet successors fail.

THE MOLE

I do not ask from thy vicarious pain,
 To win ambiguous good,
Or draw strange secrets from thy shattered brain
 And palpitating blood.

Like thee I feast on what I did not earn,
 And quake at destiny,
But seeing I am stronger, thou shalt learn
 To do my will, or die.

The earth-worm hears thee scraping overhead,
 To push thy tunnel dim,
In vain he writhes across his oozy bed,
 If thou encounter him.

Thy comfortable cape so deftly dight,
 Unnoted girds thee round :
Who set those hands so scholarly and white
 To fumble underground ?

THE MOLE

But shouldst thou think thyself too fine to hide,
Too dainty to be foul,
Oh, wait awhile till thou hast proved and tried
What frets a human soul !

I mine, and countermine, and blindly run,
Beset with snare and gin,
And even beneath free air and merry sun
Dark fancies shut me in.

For both alike the darkness and the day,
The sunshine and the showers ;
We draw sad comfort, thinking we obey
A deeper will than ours.

THE TOAD

OLD fellow-loiterer, whither wouldst thou go ?

The lonely eve is ours.

When tides of richer fragrance ooze and flow

From heavy-lidded flowers.

With solemn hampered pace proceeding by

The dewy garden-bed,

Like some old priest in antique finery,

Stiff cope and jewelled head ;

Thy sanctuary lamps are lit at dusk,

Where leafy aisles are dim ;

The bat's shrill piccolo, the swinging musk

Blend with the beetle's hymn.

THE TOAD

Aye something paramount and priestly too,
Some cynic mystery,
Lurks in the dull skin with its dismal hue,
The bright ascetic eye ;

Thou seem'st the heir of centuries, hatched out
With æons on thy track ;
The dust of ages compasses about
Thy lean and shrivelled back.

Thy heaving throat, thy sick repulsive glance
Still awes thy foes around ;
The eager hound starts back and looks askance,
And whining paws the ground.

Yet thou hast forfeited thy ancient ban,
Thy mystical control ;
We know thee now to be the friend of man,
A simple homely soul ;

THE TOAD

And when we deemed thee curiously wise,
 Still chewing venomed paste,
Thou didst but crush the limbs of juicy flies
 With calm and critic taste.

By the grey stone half sunk in mossy mould,
 Beside the stiff boxhedge,
Thou slumberest, when the dawn with fingers cold
 Plucks at the low cloud's edge.

O royal life ! in some cool cave all day,
 Dreaming old dreams, to lie,
Or peering up to see the larkspur sway
 Above thee in the sky ;

Or wandering when the sunset airs are cool
 Beside the elm-tree's foot,
To splash and sink in some sequestered pool,
 Amid the cresses' root.

THE TOAD

Abhorred, despised, the sad wind o'er thee sings ;
 Thou hast no friend to fear,
Yet fashioned in the secret mint of things
 And bidden to be here.

Man dreams of loveliness, and bids it be ;
 To truth his eye is dim.
Thou wert, because the spirit dreamed of thee,
 And thou art born of him.

THE BEETLE

WHITHER away so fast,
 Bold beetle, say ?
Spurning the sand-grains in thy busy haste,
 Across the trodden way ?
In purple mail bedight,
 So dark and truculent,
Armed cap-a-pie like Lancelot for the fight,
 Or on love's errand bent.

For thee the wheatfield towers
 In high dim colonnades.
Still hurrying down the overarching bowers ?
 Still pressing through the blades ?

THE BEETLE

The midgets in thy track
Shrink trembling and aghast,
To see thy jointed horns and armour black
Sweep proudly, proudly past.

What, wilt not stay thy feet?
No rest, no leisure yet?
Ere those dark clouds in toppling thunder meet,
And all the world be wet?
Well, I will onward too,
Into the western sky:
We'll think great thoughts of all we mean to do,
Old beetle, you and I.

THE DANDELION

DANDELION, dull of sense,
I that love thee, praise thee, spare thee
In the nook whence others tear thee,
Hear me in thine own defence ;
Hear me, herb of insolence.

Dandelion, hear me call,
Shouldst thou, dainty, seek to sigh on
Velvet pillows, dandelion,—
(Thou shalt hear me)—see thou sprawl
Where I will, or not at all.

THE DANDELION

See, the close-cropped lawn is mine !
Let the wilderness invite thee,
Let the broken shade delight thee,
Let the golden celandine
See thee, and in envy pine.

Shun the waste, the common wood,
Where the cottage-children sally :
Stalk, that snapped so musically,
Oozing thick with milky blood,
Solitude for thee were good.

Dandelion, dost thou crave
For some maiden breast to lie on,
Smiling, dying, dandelion,
Some soft hand to stoop and save,
Save thee from thy felon's grave ?

THE DANDELION

Leave thy dreaming ! know that eyes
Sad as mine have wit to bless thee,
Though I bend not, nor caress thee.
He that sports with Passion dies,
Seal thy heart : be pure, be wise.

Dandelion, see thou shun
Hope of fickle adoration :
Crush thy larger aspiration,
Flaunt thee, till thy race be run,
Stare and glow, a mimic sun.

Blow thy feathered aureole ;
Let the shadowy arrows quiver
Down the glade, across the river,
Then at eve, when flower-bells toll,
Then release thy dreaming soul.

HIDDEN LIFE

THE turf is marble underfoot,
The fountain drips with icy spears ;
And round about the cedar's root
The hungry blackbird pecks and peers.

The mud that rose beside the wheel
In liquid flake, stands stiff and hard ;
Unbroken lies the dinted heel,
With icy streaks the rut is barred.

Behind the knotted black tree-tops
The solemn sunset waning burns,
The pheasant mutters in the copse
And patters through the crackling ferns.

HIDDEN LIFE

Yet down below the frozen rind

The silent waters creep and meet ;

The roots press downwards unconfined,

Where deeper burns the vital heat.

As when the summer sky is clear,

And heat is winking on the hill,

The swimmer rests beside the weir

To feel the fresh luxurious chill,

So earth lies still beneath the night,

And takes no thought of wintry woe,

She shudders with a keen delight,

And nestles in her robe of snow.

AZALEA

A WINDOW into a dusty street :

A weary head, and a task that brings
Scanty profit nor aught of sweet
To the hours that lag on their leaden wings.

Some one dropt me a charm to-day,
Dropt and vanished and bade me hope ;
Yellow azalea, one tall spray,
Caught from a flashing fairy slope.

Bursting out like a starry shower,
Petals curled like a hanging wave,
Who that fashioned you, dainty flower,
Dreamed of a spirit so sweet and brave ?

AZALEA

See my brow to your charm is bent :

Where you pour from your mystic springs,
All in prodigal alchemy blent
Scents that quicken and lend me wings.

What stirs first in the dreaming brain ?

Sweetness infinite, unaware,
Aching pleasure and happy pain,
Drowned in a glory of sunny air.

Forest nooks in a summer world :

Waters slipping from ledge to ledge ;
Bowery woodlands heaped and hurled
Down to the stream from the mountain's edge.

Boats that slide on a brimming stream

Under the shelter of willow isles ;
Thoughts that wind in a mystic dream ;
Idle laughter and loving smiles ;

AZALEA

Yet there lurks in the honied wine
 Something bitter and fresh and strong ;
Wholesome savour of breeze and brine,
 Wise and wild as the linnet's song.

Sinks the fragrance perilous sweet,
 Suddenly open the startled eyes ;
Drowsily hums the teeming street,
 Thunder broods in the lowering skies.

THE DRAGONFLY

RESTLESS dragonfly, darting, dancing
Over the ribbons of trailing weed,
Cease awhile from thy myriad glancing,
Poised on the curve of the swinging reed ;

Where the lilyleaf smooths her creases,
Rest like a warrior carved in stone ;
Then when the crisp edge starts, and the breezes
Ruffle the water, arise, begone !

Mailed in terror, thy harness gleaming,
Soldier of summer, a day's desire !
Lantern eyeballs lustrously dreaming,
Mirroring woodland, hill, and spire,

THE DRAGONFLY

Wondering gaze at the depths that pent thee
Crawling soft on the dim-lit floor ;
Was it the fire in thy heart that sent thee
Brave through the ripple, to shine and soar ?

Then when the piled clouds big with thunder
Smite thee down with a summer's tear,
Floating, lost in a languid wonder,
On to the deadly swirl of the weir,

Dream of the days of thy sunny playing,
Take no thought of the depths beneath,
Till the eddies that smile in slaying
Draw thee down to the deeps of death.

I too come in the summer weather,
Dropping down when the winds are low,
Float like birds of an alien feather,
Weary of winter and Northern snow,

THE DRAGONFLY

Cool depths under us, blue above us,

Carelessly drifting side by side,

Is there a heart to guide us, love us ?

Are we but made to be tossed aside ?

Wherefore question of what befall thee

Winds that blow from the sunless shore ?

One hath made thee and One shall call thee ;

Dream in the sunlight, and ask no more.

KNAPWEED

By copse and hedgerow, waste and wall,
He thrusts his cushions red ;
O'er burdock rank, o'er thistles tall,
He rears his hardy head :
Within, without, the strong leaves press,
He screens the mossy stone,
Lord of a narrow wilderness,
Self-centred and alone.

He numbers no observant friends,
He soothes no childish woes,
Yet nature nurtures him, and tends
As duly as the rose ;

KNAPWEED

He drinks the blessed dew of heaven,
The wind is in his ears,
To guard his growth the planets seven
Swing in their airy spheres.

The spirits of the fields and woods
Throb in his sturdy veins :
He drinks the secret, stealing floods,
And swills the volleying rains :
And when the birds' note showers and breaks
The wood's green heart within,
He stirs his plummy brow and wakes
To draw the sunlight in.

Mute sheep that pull the grasses soft
Crop close and pass him by,
Until he stands alone, aloft,
In surly majesty.

KNAPWEED

No fly so keen, no bee so bold,
To pierce that knotted zone,
He frowns as though he guarded gold,
And yet he garners none.

And so when autumn winds blow late,
And whirl the chilly wave,
He bows before the common fate,
And drops beside his grave.
None ever owed him thanks or said
‘A gift of gracious heaven.’
Down in the mire he droops his head ;
Forgotten, not forgiven.

Smile on, brave weed ! let none inquire
What made or bade thee rise :
Toss thy tough fingers high and higher
To flout the drenching skies.

KNAPWEED

Let others toil for others' good,
And miss or mar their own ;
Thou hast brave health and fortitude
To live and die alone !

THE WATER-OUSEL

A shadow by the water's edge,—
A flash across the mossy ledge,
That stems the roaring race.
Dark were his plumes as dim twilight,
The crescent on his throat gleamed white,
The breeze was in his face.

I follow, but he flies before,
And when I gain the sandy shore
Close, close, methinks, behind :—
His tiny footprints speck the beach,
He fleets to some sequestered reach,
A shadow on the wind.

THE WATER-OUSEL

Love flies me as that dusky bird,
I too have marked his flight, and heard
 The rustle of his wings.
He leads me with divine deceit,
To trace the print of vanished feet,
 Not where he nests and sings.

ON THE HILL

THE curlew whistles on the waste,
The lapwing wheels in air,
The skimming heathcock cries in haste
To bid his mates beware.

The alders whisper by the fall,
The hazels in the lane,
The headstones by the chapel wall
Are black with clinging rain.

From barns high-piled with fragrant grass
The children peep to see
The stranger from the city pass—
Yet none hath need of me.

ON THE HILL

Woodland and hill together run
Where earth and sky combine.
There beats not, underneath the sun,
A lonelier heart than mine.

For love acquired or duly paid
Is not the same as given,
And they on earth of love afraid
Are half afraid of heaven.

A RECANTATION

Too proud to plead, too old to be ashamed ;
 There lay the stair that climbed the vault of
 heaven ;
And yet I know not why I never claimed
 The love you would have given.

What was it held me back ? The chilly fear
 That shrinks within itself, and dreads the touch
Of those warm hands, that make the world too near,
 And loved, alas ! too much.

Not the lone rapture of the aspiring saint,
 That fears to blind, to dim the single eye ;
But wisdom's counterfeit, too cold, too faint
 To venture, lest she die.

A RECANTATION

Who curiously weighs the sacrifice,
Who nicely calculates the loss, the gain,
Pays a sad price for being otherwise,
And wins the fierce disdain

Of those who in the world were bought and sold,
Who fell, and fell again, and sinning died,
Yet brood and nestle in the eternal fold,
When prudence pines outside.

SECRETS

HOME of my heart, when wilt thou ope
Thy silent doors to let me in?
What! not one glimpse to quicken hope
Of all that I aspire to win?

So near, and yet so oft denied!
The roses on my trellis throw
Their heedless scent from side to side,
Yet will not whisper what they know.

The yellow moon, that hangs and peers
Amid the icy horns on high,
Leans to the listening earth, yet fears
To tell the secret of the sky.

SECRETS

O pines, that whisper in the wind,
When lingering herds from pasture come,
Breathe somewhat of your steadfast mind :
The hour is yours : yet ye are dumb.

Sweet answering eyes, you too have learned
The secret that you will not tell—
I should have known it, but you turned
That moment, and the lashes fell !

Home of my heart, why stand so cold
And silent ? There is mirth within :
The sun sinks low : the day is old :
Oh let the baffled wanderer in !

DRIPTING

I SAILED with a witch in a car of foam,
Over the sleeping lake :
And she said : Sail on to my haunted home ;
Then did I answer make :—
Not so, I cried, I will ride and roam,
I will sail all day in our bell of foam,
But I may not go to your haunted home,
And your hand I will not take.

She smiled a smile like an icy lake
When the warm winds over it quiver,
Yea, wise, she said, is the choice you make,
We will sail, sail on for ever ;

DRIFTING

Over the sleeping forest go,
And scale the unvisited heights of snow,
And ride unharmed where the whirlwinds blow,
And skim o'er the deadly river.

She spoke of marvellous things with me,
On her knee I pillowed my head :
We heard the surge of the tumbling sea
As westward we fared and fled :—
And my heart was steeped in her fantasy,
Till once as we floated merrily,
Oh, here is your hand in mine, said she,
And here is my home, she said.

The idle music died in my brain,
And left me alone, awake,
And I was aware of a stony plain,
And a dizzy, haunting ache ;

DRIFTING

I sigh all day, but I sigh in vain
For a sound of the murmuring voice again,
For a draught of healing to ease my pain,
And a hand for mine to take.

UTRUMQUE NOSTRUM INCREDIBILI
MODO CONSENTIT ASTRUM

WE were friends, as the world would say,
Boys together in April weather ;
Lounged in a reprehensible way
Under the elm-trees, half the day,
Seldom serious, under the shade,
Talking of trifles, rides and rifles,
Finding each for the other made,
I the scabbard and you the blade ;
Not that we spoke of it save to joke of it ;—

UTRUMQUE NOSTRUM INCREDIBILI

That was the story ; nothing new ;
Yet it was strange to me and you,
You were gladdest and I was saddest,
You were tender and I was true ;—
So it seems to me now ; but then,
I was slave to the king of men.

Many a year since then has died ;
First we were parted, grew half-hearted,
Worked and worried and worse beside,
Thought with a sigh of the vanished prime ;
Yesterday, on a morn in May,
As the matin-bells began to chime,
Who but yourself should cross my door ?
Looking much as you looked before,
Somewhat grimmer and somewhat dimmer,
Smiling less than you smiled of yore.

MODO CONSENTIT ASTRUM

There as we talked the wonder grew ;
Was it my comrade ? was it you ?
You that I sighed for, ay, would have died for ?
Why did you frown ere your tale was told,
Chide the thrush that piped in the bush,
Curse the laburnum's hanging gold ?

I like the brooding bird was prest
Warm and fond in a narrow nest,
Sweetly bound in a simple round,
Under the shadow of mellow towers,
Softly chiming the measured hours.
You had drunk of the cup of life,
Drained its sweetness, mocked at completeness,
Nibbled at fame and dallied with strife,
Sipped the sweets of a thousand books,
Basked in laughter and loving looks,

UTRUMQUE NOSTRUM INCREDIBILI

Nestled close to the merry world ;—

Why were your bright wings suddenly furled?

Why did you lapse in your soaring flight,

Stoop and dive to the tides of night?

What have you done with your soul, my friend?

Where is the ray you were wont to send,

Glancing bright through the outer night,

Touching with hope what was dark before,

Glimmering on to the further shore?

God suffers the light to know eclipse,

Dashes the cup from the eager lips ;

You perchance would have drunk too deep ;

Fallen, lulled in a magic sleep,

Now you strain through a surge of pain,

Whirled and whelmed in the streams of death ;

Hardly touching the rock beneath.

MODO CONSENTIT ASTRUM

I meanwhile, in my slumberous isle,
Hear the trumpet blown for the fray,
Wild war music that winds away ;
Then the struggle when heroes die,
Strong helms shiver, and I not by.
Fair you think is the quiet vale,
The branching courts of the nightingale ;
Loud and long is her idle song ;—
Yet she suffers before she sings,
Folded fast are the quivering wings,
Under the leaf, to the throbbing breast
Closely the rankling thorn is prest.

Courage, my comrade ! say, we miss
All that was possible once of bliss.
Say we gave to the eager wave,
Scattering free without fear or heed,
What would have made us kings indeed.

UTRUMQUE NOSTRUM

Where we bury our hopes outworn,
Doubts, and dreams that have died of scorn,
Ah ! and a thousand sorry things,
Love like a flower unbidden springs.
Let it bloom in a faithful breast :—
That is our treasure : leave the rest.

NOT HERE

O SOUL that we have loved, O vanished light
Of those true eyes, O hands that ours have
pressed,
Where art thou? Dost thou spurn thy
proffered rest,
And weep to see us stumbling in the night?

Or is the spirit in its starry seat
As alien, as indifferent to the praise
That swells and gathers round thy human days,
And dost thou dwell in some austere retreat,

NOT HERE

Serene, forgetful of the ancient pain,
 There in that world, where peace makes all
 things well,
As when the heavy rollers swinging slow
 Are fretted with innumerable rain
That fine as slender needles pricks the swell,
 But never stirs the enormous peace below ?

A CHILD

Look in my eyes : I do not ask for love :

Lay hand in mine, and when thou wilt be free,
The oak may shelter the home-coming dove,
And thus I welcome thee.

The oak that battles with the bitter sleet
Is grim and hard, but e'er the summer come,
Thrills through and through to feel the flying feet
Alight, and nestle home.

Not that he claims her as his captive guest,
Not that he dreams she will no longer stray,
But loves the natural trust, and bids her rest
His darling for a day.

A CHILD

Dear, wilful child, that dost with sweet caprice
Scatter at heedless feet thy fairy fee,
Be good, be gracious ere thy empire cease,
And waste a smile on me.

Here where the pine, knee-deep in scented brake,
Throws his long shade across the sloping lawn,
By knoll and terrace dipping to the lake,
In valleys far withdrawn.

Climbing, by downs and precipices grim,
To yon high pinnacle, erect and grey,
That flushes rose when all the vale is dim,
And guesses at the day.

Here for a moment let our fates be one ;
By no blind chance the cunning maidens bring
You from the sway of some diviner sun,
Me from our harsher spring.

A CHILD

Old signs are written in thy tender face,
Desires, regrets that thou hast never known,
Thou art the heir of thy aspiring race,
Heir of a troubled throne,

Of hope, that hardly dost portend the morn,
And sadness, that hast scarcely guessed at pain,
God takes the characters of fate outworn,
And writes them fair again.

Those little feet that scarce the light turf press,
Those little hands so brown with wind and sun,
God grant they tremble not for weariness
Before thy course be done.

And thou shalt love, and learn what love is worth,
And thou shalt trust, and learn to value men,
And all the sudden mysteries of earth,
Shall open to thy ken.

A CHILD

Nay, no austere philosophies, sweet child !

I will not muse in churlish reverie,
It is enough for me that thou hast smiled,
That thou hast smiled on me ;

Come, talk of all thy wayward soul desires ;
What, wilt thou listen ? Then I'll not be wise,
But weave a tale of fantasy and fire
To light those wondering eyes.

What, wilt be flying ? Am I then too staid ?
Can I not smooth the meditative brow ?
Flash through the sun and flutter through the shade,
As birds from bough to bough ?

What ? dost thou linger ? Ah, my dear, how much
Thou givest, couldst thou only understand !
The kiss of childish pity, and the touch
Of thine absolving hand.

FLOWER CROWNS

No radiant diadem

For heroes' brows I twine ;
Roses and bay for them,
Sad leaves for thine !

Not the sepulchral yew,
That wears a solemn grace ;
That were more meet to strew
Some dear dead face.

Heartease and violets
In sweet humility ;
These are for calm regrets,
And not for thee.

FLOWER CROWNS

Thorns for the holy brow
Of royal suffering ;
A crown of pain, and thou
Art more than king.

But flowers that close at eve,
When dews of healing fall ;
Frail weeds of night shall weave
Thy coronal.

Or those rude herbs that shed
Their seed in miry ways ;
The lark sings overhead,
With none to praise.

Lilies for innocence,
Snowdrops for hope divine,
The rue for sad suspense,
And that is thine !

MY FRIEND

WHERE is my friend to-day ?

'Twas but a week ago

That he smiled in my face with his care-
less grace,

Loved me—but could not stay,—

What of his work, would I know ?

Little as yet to say.

Nothing as yet to show !

Where is the soul austere ?

Nourished from springs remote,

Delicate, bright with a wizard light,

Shy as a maiden's fear,

MY FRIEND

Bold as a trumpet's note,
Sweet as the woodlark's throat?—
Only he is not here :

Ever some hint perplexed
Spoke in the quivering flame,
Some shadow of doom from the gates of
 gloom ;
Often I cheered him, vexed,
Chiding his tardy fame ;
Oh, when I see him next
Will he be still the same ?

Where are the restless feet ?
Where are the starry eyes ?
The caressing hand—and the brain that
 planned

MY FRIEND

Never to realise ?
Oh, when we next shall meet,
How shall I dare to prize
What seemed so incomplete ?

Hark to the world to-day !
Yesterday some one said
That he masked with a smile a world-
ling's wile ;
Self-centred, cold and gay ;
Now that my friend is dead,
Hark to the prayers they pray !
See the false tears they shed !

What lies here on the bed ?
What is this pinched white thing,
With a stony eye and a lip that's dry ?
See I drive from the stiffened head,

MY FRIEND

Yon fly with the buzzing wing ;
Presently when I am fled,
He will return and bring—

Nay, but I do him wrong,
Nothing of him I see,
Save the shrouding dusk, the chrysalis husk,
Oh but we loved it, we !
He is serene and strong,
Hath he a thought of me
Under the angels' song ?

If it be well with him,
If it be well, I say,
I will not try with a childish cry
To draw him thence away :
Only my day is dim,
Only I long for him,
Where is my friend to-day ?

THE DEAD POET

THE child that leans his ear beside the shell,
Grows grave to hear the multitudinous roar,
Remembered echoes of the pulsing swell
That sets from shore to shore ;

But heeds not that the cool and rosy rim
Once bulged with shuddering growth of beard
and horn,
That pushed with loathly grasp about the dim
Untrodden caves forlorn :

That day by day from ooze and weltering slime
Built up his filmy chambers, cell by cell,
Yet only schemed to shelter for a time
His shrinking softness well.

THE DEAD POET

My poet, thus I drink thy dreaming soul,
I scan the self-wrought fabric line by line,
I mark the mounting music surge and roll,
Inviolatè, divine ;

Yet when thy weary eyes grew hard in death,
The busy crowd laid hands upon thy bones,
They probed the impulse of thy lightest breath,
And analysed thy groans ;

With down-drawn lips where lurked a curious
smile,
They traced the devious error of thy days ;
They said, We will be strong and stern awhile,
Before we dare to praise.

They ask by what dark alchemy he drew
So sweet a savour from so rank a root,

THE DEAD POET

So while the yeasty slander worked and grew,
I sighed irresolute.

I thank thee, O my poet ! What thou art
Is mine, and what thou wert is not for me ;
Perchance the very sin that clutched thy heart,
Thy fruitless agony,

Winged most the soaring spirit : hadst not erred,
Thou hadst not raged the dragging mire to shun
With battling pinion, as the lowliest bird
Sails nearest to the sun :

I take the airy structure, lean my ear
Beside it, and the wizard echoes roll ;
My heart grows clean and I forget to fear,
O thou imperious soul !

OMAR KHAYYAM

Out of the tombs, across the centuries

The chill voice called and answered 'Yea, I
knew !

I prayed the prayers that bring no peace to you,
I paid the same sad price for growing wise ;

I knew the sick despairs that vex you still,
The same dumb night, the old unwavering stars,
The same wild lust that in a moment mars
The patient barriers of the labouring will.

And this was mine, to inweave the tender dream
With shame and pain, and all that hope ignores;
To catch the whispers of Eternity ;

OMAR KHAYYAM

To gaze beyond the whirlpool, see the stream,
The steady stream, that sets to desert shores
Far off, and those dim continents to be.'

EDWARD FITZGERALD

I HEAR a stronger music in the air,
I mark a richer harmony combine
With those thin eager melodies of thine ;
I look for thee and find another there ;—

And dost thou beckon from the ages dim,
My cynic minstrel, Omar ? Is it thou ?
Or do I trace, behind the furrowed brow,
The shy and sober lineaments of him

Who lingered listless in a land of streams ;—
As when some laughing child endues a mask
Of frozen horror, whence the pure eye
shines

EDWARD FITZGERALD

In smiling softness ; 'twas thy destined task
To dig new ores from those ungarnered mines,
And flush with young desires those pallid
dreams.

IN COWPER'S LETTERS

POET of home, green walks and fireside ease,
The trivial joys in which our days are spent,
How cheerfully thy tender merriment
Falls on our ear in such dark hours as these !—

When the sick thoughts that did thy spirit freeze
Hover about our mortal tenement,
And unsubstantial fear and vague lament
People the sighing of the restless breeze.

Thy hedgerow elms that stand so starved and sere
When winter crusts each twig with crystal
rime,

IN COWPER'S LETTERS

Still break in cloudy greenness, when the year
Wheels into warmth, and 'tis the budding
time :

If I grow old and sad, why so didst thou !
Yet love hath crowned the pale world-weary brow.

WILLIAM COLLINS

STILL on the misty flat, below the down,
In miry creeks the slow brine comes and goes ;
The minster tower across the red-roofed town
From dawn to eve its circling shadow throws ;

The walls that echoed to thy shuddering groan
Are vocal now with heedless boyish talk ;
The pigeons huddle on their ledge of stone,
Beneath, the brawling daws confederate stalk.

Hushed the long echo of the vesper hymn ;
Across thy grave the solemn shadows grow :

WILLIAM COLLINS

And art thou grateful for the coolness dim ?

Sad singer, dost thou slumber well below ?

The glimmering evening thou hast made thine own

Surely and silently in softness falls,

She draws the colour from the mellow stone,

And veils the majesty of stately walls.

Ay, we can leave thee : thou art born again,

Thy wistful smile shines sweet across the
years ;

Lapt in the still contentment born of pain,

Reaping the harvest of thy shadowy fears.

And seems it strange a younger singer's hand

Should falter over griefs so long decayed,

Should lean across the century, and stand

Weighing a woe irrevocably weighed ?

WILLIAM COLLINS

The red rose beckons from his garden-plot ;
 And 'Life,' she says, 'is mine, and thine to-day.'
The fond abstracted singer heeds her not,
 O'er mouldering bones he sighs himself away.

Nay, when a fiery soul that might have made
 Immortal music, mute and voiceless lies,
Only in dull hearts is the sorrow laid,
 The loss, the bitter wonder never dies.

Thine was the pain with startled eyes to see
 The larger range of undiscovered art ;
Though the blind world in critic mockery
 Curbed the fierce beat of thy prophetic heart.

Risen like a star, extinguished like a star
 In some brief conflagration, when the light

WILLIAM COLLINS

That orb'd itself in secret tracts afar
Flares out, and slips engulfed in ancient
night.

And shall we plead the yearnings of our race,
Our shattered hope, our faltering innocence,
Brandish our faint ideals in the face
Of Him who thrusts us hither, draws us
hence ?

Who knits the ravelled thread with prescient ruth,
Sad schemings, unendurable despair ;
Though reeling minds may totter, He is Truth ;
Though hearts may ache to view Him, He
is there.

DEAN SWIFT

ALAS, alas ! sad, bitter, loving man ;

With jests for others, to thyself least kind ;
That didst with studied boldness dare to scan
The shadowy horrors of the darkened mind.

A heart that ached for love, by nature made
'Neath loving lips to grow more sweet and mild,
Mutely itself upon the altar laid,
From that true self by truer self exiled.

As that prophetic roll, upon the lip
Of acrid savour, Heaven's own manna proved ;
Ay ! there was sweetness here, 'mid stain and slip
Of word and thought, to witness how he loved !

DEAN SWIFT

Thou didst look love and sorrow in the face,
And sorrow choosing, didst but love defer,
And love hath crowned thee in a calmer place,
With her who soothed thy aching life, and her

Whose weakness made thee cruel, who designed
A jealous thrust and fell upon the steel ;
Let those who blame the unforgiving mind
Learn from thy caustic silence how to feel.

Alas ! what means for us thy troubled face ?
The pure in heart still striving to be foul ?
The generous spirit scheming for a place ?
The filthy jest that masked the serious soul ?

This : that our days are wholly incomplete ;—
Some baseness mars them, some unbanished
taint,

DEAN SWIFT

That clogs in miry ways the aspiring feet,
And specks the robe of many a willing saint.

We, in the dust of some disordered room,
For our dropt treasure peer and grope aghast ;
Then if the hand encounter through the gloom
The golden circle, seize it, hold it fast !

THOMAS GRAY

SINGER most melancholy, most austere,
So overcharged with greatness, that thy frame
Was all too frail to feed the aspiring flame,
And sank in chill disdain and secret fear,

Save that thy idle fingers now and then
Touched unawares a slender chord divine ;
Oh, if but half the silence that was thine
Were shared to-day by clamorous minstrel-men !

I thread the woodland where thy feet have strayed,
The gnarled trunks dreaming out their ancient
tale

THOMAS GRAY

Are fair as then ; the same sad chime I hear
That floats at eve across the purple vale ;
The music of thy speech is in my ear,
And I am glad because thou wast afraid.

GILBERT WHITE

THOU wast a poet, though thou knew'st it not,
Then, on a merry morning, when the thrush
Fluted and fluted briskly in the bush,
And blackbirds whisked along thy garden-plot,

Didst watch an hour beside thy hanger's foot
The quivering kestrel hung aloft the skies
To mark aught stirring, or with pensive eyes
In cherry-orchards didst forecast the fruit.

And shall I deem it idle thus to scan
The myriad life, and reverently wait,

GILBERT WHITE

A patient learner, auguring, behind
The restless hand, the unhesitating mind ?
This was thy daily task, to learn that man
Is small, and not forget that man is great.

CHALVEY

*O Chalvey stream, dear Chalvey stream,
There are not many singers
Would think you worth a minstrel's dream,
And very weary fingers.
I sing your praises undeterred ;—
In days when sight was sharper,
Another Jordan was preferred
To Abana and Pharpar.*

A mile across the level land
(A pool is set with willows),
You toss a cone of restless sand,
And leap in tiny billows.

CHALVEY

So cool and calm, from hidden springs,
 Out of the dark that bound you,
You join a hundred living things,
 Sweet sights, sweet scents around you.

You ripple on 'neath summer skies,
 With grassy banks to guide you,
Where to and fro swift laughter flies
 Of boys that play beside you.
And all at once, before you know,
 Beneath the bridge you shiver,
You thread the stately pool, and lo!
 You topple in the river.

By weir and lock, by bridge and mill,
 You roll and roar and rumble,
And fouler things and fouler still
 Within your eddies tumble,

CHALVEY

And soon beneath a smoky pall
 The city hums about you,
And churned by iron wheels you fall
 In tides that toss and flout you.

Then waking after fevered days,
 You see, beyond the shipping,
The shadowy headland through the haze,
 The red buoy dipping, dipping ;
The air intoxicates like wine,
 And in the merry weather,
The flying sail, the hissing brine
 Keep carnival together.

Oh, in that larger place, amid
 The ecstasy of motion,
When you are free and fearless, hid
 Within the leaping ocean,

CHALVEY

When fond constraint to freedom yields,
 With all the world before you,
Forget not the familiar fields,
 The quiet source that bore you.

.
*O Chalvey stream, dear Chalvey stream,
 Flow onward unabated,
What though to careless eyes you seem
 A little overrated.
I'm not ashamed to call you friend,
 To own our fond relations,
Like all things mortal you depend
 On your associations.*

ON THE WESTERN CLIFFS

Out of the windy waste
 Of waters rolling gray,
Homeward the red sails haste
 Across the bay.
Over the downs I see
 The summits black and sheer,
When evening on the lea
 Is pale and clear.

There as the twilight falls,
 The seabirds float and cry ;
(Only the mountain walls
 Make faint reply) ;

ON THE WESTERN CLIFFS

Or with broad wing decline
 Down to their rocky home,
Warm in the chilly brine,
 Nestled in foam.

Over the oozy weed
 The flying feet haste on,
Hither and thither speed
 Ere day be done.
For them the fry that dive
 Poise in their liquid bed,
They neither fear nor strive,
 Sleep and are fed.

Then comes the night, the end,
 What should their dying be?
Death steals, a silent friend,
 Out of the sea.

ON THE WESTERN CLIFFS

Under the rocky edge

 They close their languid eye,
While shrill from tuft and ledge
 Their brethren cry.

Or where the stranded wrack,

 Rimmed on the stunted grass,
Rattles so dry and black
 As the winds pass,
The draggled feather flies,
 The frail denuded bones
Bleach, and the sightless eyes,
 On the grey stones.

Under the weary hill

 The wandering footsteps cease ;
He that must wander still
 Envies your peace.

ON THE WESTERN CLIFFS

Wasted by harsh events,
Sighs to be large and free,
Mix with the elements
And breathe and be.

NORTHWARDS

AN orb of fire behind the grove

The sun speeds on ;

The sliding streams that seaward move

Are chill and wan :

The mire is ridged with icy crust,

The tufted meads

Are specked with hoary flakes, where thrust

The frozen reeds.

The mellow light begins to pale ;

The moon on high,

Too dim, too cloudlike to prevail,

Hangs in the sky.

NORTHWARDS

Through this bleak hour that brings the dark,
Ere daylight fade,
We fly on iron wheels, and mark
The changing glade.
Northwards the shuddering axles reel,
With merry din ;
Like moving spokes on some slow wheel
The furrows spin.
The copse, the farmstead shifts ; and both
Fly like the wind.
Swift runs the distant spire, as loth
To lag behind.

What means the transient glimpse, the sight
Of waste and home ?
What stirs the roving heart so light
To choose and come ?

NORTHWARDS

They wave a welcome back, 'Oh stay
Thy course severe,
A truce to wandering! Here,' they say,
'Lies peace, and here.
Rest, rest,' they call, 'unquiet mind,
Here learn to dream,
To love, and wander unconfined
As breeze or stream.'

'Ah no,' I answer, 'night is near;
Not mine to set
The bourne I crave: what most I fear
Runs with me yet.
I hurry, hurry through the night,
I hasten on
To see what lands the Northern light
Next shines upon,

NORTHWARDS

When I have learnt what longings are,
What means regret,
Something,—beyond the furthest star—
Shall call me yet.'

IN THE SOUTH

IN the sunny summer weather, in a garden by
the sea,
Where the breeze scarce stirs the drooping fans
of many a tropic tree,
Only all the lazy morning to attend my listless
dreams,
Doth the languid eucalyptus breathe the sound
of falling streams ;
High above the huddling houses blinking white
with shuttered eyes,
You may see the city, roof by roof, and tower by
tower arise,

IN THE SOUTH

Dazzling walls embowered in greenness, spires
that peep through palm and plane,
Vines that droop o'er trellised terrace, runlets
that forget the rain,
Upward ever upward climbing, till the high-
piled tops are won,
Streaked with tracts of sombre woodland quiver-
ing in the steady sun.

.

Or about the league-long crest the vaporous cloud
is folded gray,
When the sea is white with breakers and the
beach is wet with spray,
And the hills are flecked with coursing shadows,
and the hasty wind
Blusters through the tumbled garden, late so
indolent and kind.

IN THE SOUTH

But to-night sweet peace enfolds me ; only from
the lazy town

Floats the hum of summer voices, and the mighty
ships swing down,

Blowing here a mellower horn to bid the wander-
ing truant home,

Or the solemn convent bells are rung in many a
sounding dome,

Or the watch-dog bays belated, and with shrill
effusive note

Cocks are challenging the morning perched in
homesteads far remote ;

Idle sounds that come and go in gusty pauses
of the breeze,

Hurrying to cool vales of sunrise o'er the crests
of rippling seas.

.

IN THE SOUTH

Man, unlike his fellow-brutes, who wounded
 creep apart to die,
Flies from shelter, basks in light, and smiles in
 alien company.
Mocked by life and hope that flies before him,
 drawing fiercer breath,
Darkens light and poisons laughter with the un-
 dertone of death.

Oh, the world is strong and careless, soft the sky
 and still the sea ;
What avails the myriad gladness, if it be not
 glad for me ?
What for me the brooding sunlight and the
 creeper's scented breath,
When a thousand trembling hands are beating at
 the doors of death ?

IN THE SOUTH

What avails the fragrant passion of the clustering
 spires of bloom,

If I chafe in hopeless longing, if I pine in lonely
 gloom ?

Yet I think the load would lighten, could I dream
 that endless pain

Were the seed of love and laughter, when the
 world is born again.

I could laugh at suffering, were it pledge of some
 imparted joy,

Gave it but a sudden moment's gladness to a
 thoughtless boy.

.

Thus I wrote beneath the trailing vines, not
 knowing what might be,

In an island ringed about by the interminable sea.

‘ CŒLUM, NON ANIMUM ’

I FELT the soul within me yearn,
Take life, and quicken into speech :
She said, ‘ What God hath bid thee learn,
To-day He bids thee teach.

He weighed the pain and dealt the blow,
He made thee patient, almost brave ;
Then came the hope, the after-glow ;
All this, and more He gave.’

I said, ‘ Amid the trivial noise,
The natural stir, the ingenuous strife,

‘CŒLUM, NON ANIMUM’

I dare not bid these secret joys
To bourgeon into life.

I’ll seek,’ I said, ‘some sheltered grange,
Where suns are sweet and winds are low ;
From day to day with scarce a change
Beneath my elms I’ll go.

There in the silent sunlit air
The heavenly voices linger best,
Soft songs shall thrill and echo there
About my home of rest.’

I lingered late : the eve was mine :
The voice was clear, the lute was strung ;
And yet no messenger divine
Thrilled through the expectant tongue.

‘CÆLUM, NON ANIMUM’

‘Nay,’ said the chiding voice at length,
Thou hast done ill to heed thy fears,
My strenuous amplitude of strength
Speaks not to vacant ears.

Return, resume thy destined task,
Who labours most, he hearkens best,
A faithful heart is all I ask,
My peace is not thy rest.’

IN EXILE

How fares the world at home to-day ?

 The road, the high familiar trees,
The climbing lane that breaks away

 By sandy cuttings, where it please ?
The steep and stony field, I trow,

 That feeds the rushing water-head,
Is thick with sorrel tall ere now,

 A dimpling sheet of filmy red :
I know that by the covert side,

 Where shrill belated lapwings call,
The ragwort flaunts his tattered pride,
 In green and gold majestic.

IN EXILE

Cool orchids, pulsing purple blood,
 About the marshy meadows low,
Or in the spare sequestered wood
 With paler grace, unnoted blow.

So sharp, so clear the fancies float
 Before the dreaming soul, that I
Can almost hear the thristle's note,
 And spell the early cuckoo's cry.
How strange a passion in me broods
 For those green miles, that homely
 glade,
That sweep of undistinguished woods,
 That little space of sun and shade ;
How sick the longings on me crowd
 To thread again the sunny street,
Where now the converse rises loud,
 (And I lie here) ; to set my feet,

IN EXILE

Where those who take my place may stand,
 To dream my own familiar dreams :—
And I am loitering in a land,
 A tumbled land of stones and streams.

REDITURUS

GREEN vales of Kent, across the blue
My heart unbidden turns to you ;
Your woodlands deep, your misty skies
To me are more than paradise.

Here sprawls the earth, in chaos hurled,—
Brute fastness of a ruder world,—
Couched dragonlike with spine and horn,
And flushed with fury eve and morn.

Beyond, aloft, the snow-capped dome
Hangs like a bell of fairy foam ;

REDITURUS

And frowns across the nearer wood,
In envious, aching solitude.

How free to range 'neath larger skies !
We murmur—yet the eager eyes
But change th' horizon, when we roam ;
The brooding heart still sits at home.

Ye cheer me not, O hills austere !
I may not, dare not linger here :
Yet happier, that I carry hence
Some touch of your indifference.

Farewell, farewell ; I see you fade
Far off, a tract of rugged shade ;
The sun that quits these darkening skies,
Green vales of Kent, on you shall rise.

MY WILL

I WOULD live, if I had my will,
In an old stone grange on a Yorkshire hill ;
Ivy-encircled, lichen-streaked,
Low and mullioned, gable-peaked,
With a velvet lawn, and a hedge of yew,
An apple orchard to saunter through,
Hyacinth-scented in spring's clear prime,
And rich with roses in summer-time,
And a waft of heather over the hill,
Had I my will.

MY WILL

Over my tree-tops, grave and brown,
Slants the back of a breezy down ;
Through my fields, by the covert edge,
A swift stream splashes from ledge to ledge
On to the hamlet, scattered, gray,
Where folk live leisurely day by day ;
The same old faces about my walks ;
Smiling welcomes and simple talks ;
Innocent stories of Jack and Jill ;

Had I my will.

How my thrushes should pipe ere noon,
Young birds learning the old birds' tune ;
Casements wide, when the eve is fair,
To drink the scents of the moonlit air.
Over the valley I'd see the lights
Of the lone hill-farms, on the upland heights ;

MY WILL

And hear when the night is alert with rain,
The steady pulse of the labouring train,
With the measured gush of the merry rill,
Had I my will.

Then in the winter, when gusts pipe thin,
By a clear fire would I sit within,
Warm and dry in the ingle nook,
Reading at ease in a good grave book ;
Under the lamp, as I sideways bend,
I'd scan the face of my well-loved friend ;
Writing my verses with careless speed,
One at least would be pleased to read ;
Thus sweet leisure my days should fill,
Had I my will.

Then when the last guest steps to my side ;
—May it be summer, the windows wide,—

MY WILL

I would smile as the parson prayed,
Smile to think I was once afraid ;
Death should beckon me, take my hand,
Smile at the door of the silent land,
Then the slumber, how good to sleep
Under the grass where the shadows creep,
Where the headstones slant on the wind-swept
hill !

I shall have my will !

ST. LUKE'S SUMMER

AH me ! how good to breathe, to hear, to see !

Flown is the languid summer's drooping heat,
The large wind blusters, racing boisterously,
And whistles in the stubble at our feet.

Before the dark November glooms draw near,
Before the sad mist, like a veil, is drawn
Athwart the leafless covert, and the drear
Wet winter shudders at the lingering dawn.

To-day, when Autumn over leafy miles
Unfurls his crimson banners, brave and bold,

ST. LUKE'S SUMMER

The pine frowns blacker through the forest aisles,
When all beside is splashed with reckless gold.

Pale with chill lustre in the duskier plain,
The brimming river winding I descry,
Under the flying footsteps of the rain
The hamlet's whirling smoke-wreaths fade and
fly.

Over the red roofs blinks the solemn tower,
With shuttered eyelids, meditating peace,
Or stirs itself to strike a pensive hour,
And dreams and wonders till the echoes cease.

At that calm note a host of broodings rash
Take noisy wing, and fly the troubled brain,
Bred in the damp hours when the slow rains splash
And trickle down the sodden streaming lane.

ST. LUKE'S SUMMER

Thy soft balms mollify the fretted soul,
Fresh wind of autumn : how divine to see
The tides of circumstance beneath me roll,
Alone, upon a grassy down with thee.

Yet back upon themselves the old chimes ring !
Healing is well, yet wherefore wounds to heal?
Bear with the listless hour, the suffering ;
The breezes blow, and we have learned to feel.

HOMEWARDS

COMRADE, the sun is low ;
Now doth the heavy West
Burn for leagues like a smouldering coal with a
smoky glow ;
Oh, the day pants for rest !

Higher, the liquid sky,
Green as an ice-fed stream,
Deepens to infinite blue, and softly inveigles
the shy
Stars from their day-long dream.

HOMEWARDS

Out of the wayside flower
Ebbs the colour away :
Crocuses delicate, pink, that lay like a starry
shower,
Dapple the dusk with grey.

Blackness gathers apace
Under the shrouded pines,
Over the tumbled stones that stream from the
mountain's face
Slowly the shade declines.

Only the dying fires,
Flashes of farewell light,
Flush in the old stone crags, and flame in the
rocky spires ;
Suddenly falls the night.

HOMEWARDS

Comrade, the dark is come ;
Drop to the welcoming vale,
Steer to the winding lights and the city's generous hum ;
Then when the dawn is pale,

Quitting the kindly street,
Leaving the fireside bright,
Laugh with the parting guest and smile on the child we meet,
Free as the fleeting light ;

We too speed from the west,
Speed with the rushing earth ;
Still the unsatisfied heart and still the imperious quest
Mock at our devious mirth.

HOMEWARDS

Hush, for the world must sleep :

Passion and heat are done :

Who would the pulsing fervours of clamorous
noontide keep

Till he fade in the sun ?

Twilight, pitiful, sad,

Night, so chilly and stern,

Breathe your vastness upon us, and make us
brave and glad ;

Better to brood than burn.

Suns in the heart of the night

Flame like a restless spark :

Only the silence waits till the aching gaps unite
Into the infinite dark.

VIATOR

Is this the February air

That breathes in fragrance on my brow ?

So soft, methinks, 'twould never dare

To nip the bloom or whirl the snow ;—

And yet no hint of treachery

Lurks in the clear enlivened sky.

The speckled arum-spike begins

His crumpled glistening cap to thrust :

Blithe on the road the dry leaf spins,

The yew is packed with yellow dust ;

Beneath the elm small things are seen

That star the dyke with lively green.

VIATOR

Where smoothly dips the sheltered lea
The merry crested plovers run,
Or lost in dreamy reverie
Hoist their long wings to feel the sun ;
Or wheel with melancholy cry,
And lessen in the western sky.

The eyes that track them draw the soul
To fly, to follow where they go ;
They came from where the torrents roll—
Where those vext lands were dim with snow ;
They little reck what ways they tread ;
Or by what waters they are fed.

Huge toppling clouds are piled in air ;—
A bluff in billowy vapour rolled,—
Faint summits perilously fair,—
With thunderous base of sullen gold.

VIATOR

I thread in thought the cloudland through
To win the upper purer blue ;

The chestnuts by the timbered grange
Are standing as they stood before,
Yet somewhat delicate and strange
Informs them : they are old no more ;
A hundred times I passed this way :—
What spirit makes them new to-day ?

The soul puts on her summer dress,
And, tired awhile of scheme and gain,
Clothes with delight the wilderness,
And dreams that she is pure again :
Then, idly wondering, tries her wing,
Only content to soar and sing.

Out of the woods sweet spirits call—
Here be at rest, with all forgiven :

VIATOR

Thy burden galls thee ; let it fall,
And take the flowery road to heaven ;
Thou lingerest in the stony way,
Custom, not honour bids thee stay.

Nay, nay, I answer, I have heard,
As in some half-remembered dream,
A note that shames the jocund bird,
A truer voice than wind or stream ;
Ye know not and ye may not know,
Ye aid me, cheer me ere I go.

The birds sail home : the mouldering tower
With measured chime tolls out the day ;
Close with the irrevocable hour ;
Make thy brief thanks ; thy vespers pay :
To-morrow's seed waits to be sown.
To-day God gave thee for thine own.

STORM AND TEMPEST

THE gale thunders on the roof ;
The raindrops splash the wall ;
And the stars shine far aloof ;
And God sees all.

Through the rack of flying cloud
The watery moon wades on,
And the lime-trees whisper loud ;
The brief day is gone.

Within, the lamp is lit,
And the fire burns red and warm,
And I ponder as I sit,
Glad and free from harm.

STORM AND TEMPEST

Strange that the driving cloud
Doth not stay my merriment !
When the wind pipes thin and loud,
I am most content.

Out on the plunging sea
The frail boats dip and spin ;
Where the cliffs tower drearily
O'er the breakers' din.

Men hold their breath for fear
Of the shrieking, hissing foam,
Wonder if day be near,
And think of home.

One on the reeling deck
Gasps at the thundering wind ;
Dreaming of death and wreck,
And what lies behind.

STORM AND TEMPEST

The boy by the gunwale stands
 Watching his father's face ;
The wheel jerks in his hands,
 In the roaring race.

They wish, but dare not pray
 Weary and tempest-tost,
The word they dare not say
 Would confess them lost.

And I sit idly here
 Watching the embers fall,
And they are sick with fear,
 And God sees all.

SHADOWS

THE imperious soul that bows to no man's will,
That takes by right the service of his kind,
Floats in free air, unchastened, unconfined,
Strikes what he lists, enslaving, spoiling still.

But when he falls upon the common ground,
Swift, swift the visions falter : his brave wing
Sustains him not ; and that swift shadowy thing
Runs from the darkness, and enwraps him round.

So you may see the hovering kestrel beat
Over the crag, slow-circling, pinions stiff,
Then fall through wind and sunshine, check
his flight,

SHADOWS

And as he wheels to perch below the cliff,
His shadow fleets across the limestone white
And closes with him, settling at his feet.

THE DEEPS OF GOD

O TRUTH ! how vast thy empire, how immense,
Lost in thy gracious nearness, we forget ;
Our narrow bounds we strenuously set
About us, too intent to wander thence :

We dream of majesty and innocence
Among a thousand trivial mockeries,
Till some high deed soars up, and draws the eyes
Aloft, and lightens the bewildered sense.

So when we creep beneath the lowering skies,
The lonely hern above the marshland sails
High overhead, slow flapping down the wind ;

THE DEEPS OF GOD

And all at once the grey veil seems to rise
And tower, and as the lowlit evening pales
The illimitable cloudland looms behind.

CHURCH WINDOWS

OLD craftsmen of the Galilean lake,
Seems it not strange to you all day to stand
In these high minster windows, looking down
Upon uplifted faces, folded palms?
Each in his niche of costly carven work,
Crocket and spire and finial overhead,
And underfoot such radiant stones as those
Ye dreamed of, when your pure uplifted thought,
Withdrawn a moment from the raging world
That God makes fair and men make horrible,
Took shape in bright imaginings, and traced
The pearly city, paved with limpid gold
Foursquare, mysterious.

CHURCH WINDOWS

Seems it strange to you

To feel the high sun beat and stream at noon
Through your ensanguined vesture, through the
hands

Once rough with spray and cordage, now at
length

White as some dainty scholar's, wan and thin
With long seclusion, while the altered ray,
Through curious gems and holy aureoles,
Paints hues of Paradise on sculptured stone ?

Or when the organ rises, growing bold,
With all his crowded trumpets, soaring flutes,
Grave mellow diapasons, gushing out
With such a flood of sound, the leaden bands
That bind you, throb in shattering ecstasy,
What wonder if you dream that peace on earth
Grows perfect, and your kingdom comes indeed ?

CHURCH WINDOWS

Start ye to hear, in soft mellifluous tones,
When all the throng is hushed, the words ye said
In ignorance, before ye yet were wise,
The childish question, the uncertain claim,
The tale of all your desperate treachery,
(Before the Spirit flamed above your brows,)
When love and adoration were too weak
To meet the stern set look of scribes and priests,
The unclean jests of riotous legionaries,
And the long gleaming of those Roman spears?

Or when the hush is deepest, and you hear
The fiery speech of the forerunner, John,
John the wild hermit, the unquiet heart
Who cried and yearned and was unsatisfied,
And then the mild majestic voice of Him
Who was your Master first, and then your God,
(Too late for hope, but not too late for faith,)

CHURCH WINDOWS

And memory deepens till you almost see
The rolling wilderness, with ridge and vale,
Run to the Northern heights, the Mount, the
streets

Of white Capernaum, and the boat that swayed
Upon the swelling of the azure tide,
While He yet spake ; and evermore the ring
Of wondering faces, waiting to be fed.

And do ye smile in sweet austerity
To hear yourselves extolled, your faltering faith,
Your weak endeavourings to pierce beyond
The night, the stars, the little labouring world,
To that high throne so infinitely far ;
When the pale preacher waxing eloquent
Would make you demigods, not patient men
Who wept, and wondered, and but half believed ?

CHURCH WINDOWS

Then, when the lordly crowd streams out, to join
The merry world and shoulder welcome cares,
And the mute handful of enraptured souls
Bend low in utter prayer, or gather round
To hear the words ye heard in Zion once,
In that bare upper room, when secret dread
O'ershadowed all the board, ere yet the night
Fell, and the stammering traitor crept apart
Too dark at heart to join the vesper hymn.

When bread and wine, too high for angels' food,
In paten rich and sacred chalice gleam,
Till veiled in secret snowy linen, stands
The unfinished feast, too sacred to behold,
Unlike the fragments of the meat divine,
Called in an instant from the winds of heaven,
Ye stored in sorry baskets, so to stay
Your hunger in the inhospitable wild.

CHURCH WINDOWS

Say, is it strange? The world is full of woe,
Sharp torments, drear bewildering agonies,
Yet full of sweet surprises, sins forgiven,
And hopes fulfilled beyond the reach of hope.

And He that in your midst is lifted up,
Branded and buffeted and crowned with scorn,
Looks with clear eyes beyond the low-hung mist
We move in, reads the secret of the stars,
Asks of the Father, and is not denied
The knowledge not allowed to restless brains,
The eternal cause, the all-sufficing end.

THE VOICES OF THE WORLD

THE world is well, said he,
I would not mend it ;—
My gold was given to me,
And I may spend it.
Glory and love and wine,
Freedom and leisure,
All these are mine, are mine,
And serve my pleasure.
As for what lies behind
I do not heed it ;
Death will be swift and kind
When I shall need it.

THE VOICES OF THE WORLD

The world is hard, one said,
 I may not mend it ;
I make the gold, he said,
 And others spend it.
The huge house hums with din
 From roof to basement ;
I draw the foul air in
 Through a smoke-dimmed casement.
My children moan for bread
 In the crowded city,
I droop my aching head
 With none to pity.

The world, one said, is base ;
 I cannot mend it ;
Yet beauty shines, and grace,
 Sweet things attend it.

THE VOICES OF THE WORLD

I sit at home, he saith,
 With contemplation ;
I live by hope and faith
 And adoration.
I breathe melodious breath,
 Though ill assail me ;
And I can summon death,
 If all else fail me.

The world, one said, is weak,
 And I would mend it ;
Hearts were not made to break,
 Nor death to end it.
Meanwhile I must resign
 Freedom and beauty ;
Though sweet things smile and shine
 Clearer shines duty.

THE VOICES OF THE WORLD

Yet love and faith grow strong,
 When light is lowest.
How long, my God, how long ?
 Jesus, Thou knowest.

The world, God said, is mine,
 And I shall mend it ;
I lend thee what is thine,
 'Tis thine to lend it.
Thy measured task to turn
 A few short pages ;
I watch, I wait, I yearn,
 Through endless ages.
Then weep thy destined tear,
 And laugh thy laughter.
And I who wound thee here
 Will bless hereafter.

MOLINOS

OH, I wait from hour to hour,
Just wait what the next may bring ;
A blossom, a bud, a flower,
Or a bitter crawling thing.
I think, when the tense will bends,
Of all I have missed or marred ;
Yet I know it is God who sends,
And 'tis not so hard.

I looked in the years gone by
For great flowing gifts from His hand ;
I stared at the fathomless sky,
And knew I should understand ;

MOLINOS

Now the folk pass on in the street,
And rarely stop at my gate,
I bless them, the careless feet,
Though I only wait.

Through the open windows the sun
Shines rarely, parting the gloom ;
He stays e'er his course be run
To enliven the lonely room ;
Yet over the racing rack
He shines without stint or stain,
The winds blow keen at his back,
And shall I complain ?

Ah yes ! I can wait and smile,
I can scan the long road where it lies,
Like a ribbon for many a mile,
Till it melt in the infinite skies ;

MOLINOS

And when I have watched my fill,
And the chill eve cometh late,
Let me say, I have learned thy will,
I can wait, still wait.

OLD FOES

WHAT, must I leave the banquet and the laughter,
Oh, thou pale visitant that criest low ?
Wilt thou be ever thus ? Far hence, hereafter,
Oh, art thou other than the thing I know ?

As one that listens from his window leaning,
When night's slow curtain shuts the glen from
view,
Now with a thrill of sweetness overweening,
Now with a shudder at what may be true,

OLD FOES

Hears many times, but ever doubts in hearing,
 Borne by the shifting breeze now loud, now low,
Too faint for hope and too distinct for fearing,
 The distant measured footfall come and go.

Fear, silent fear, I deemed that thou hadst left me ;
 Why dost thou dog my shrinking path again ?
Lo of what manliness thou hast bereft me !
 Where is the fortitude that comes of pain ?

Why dost thou whisper, Love's a merry madness,
 Friendship's the easy brotherhood of youth ?
I would not wilfully abide in sadness,
 Save that I fear thou whisperest but the truth.

Nay, but I answer : if indeed thou callest,
 Grant me a respite while I plead with thee ;
Small was my joy : I thank thee for the smallest !
 Come when thou willest and be one with me.

OLD FOES

Lo, I am free ! I choose the pain thou bearest :

Thou art the messenger of One who waits ;

Thou wilt reveal the hidden face thou wearest,

When my feet falter at the Eternal Gates.

HOC UNUM CUPIO

I ONLY ask to know it is Thy will,
That Thou hast planned the pain and probed
the sore,
That when I welter in dark waves of ill
They were Thy choice before :

Not some blind beating of insensate might,
That knows not whence or why, but hastens on,
And recks not if its stroke be strong or light,
Nor whom it falls upon ;

Saying, I know no recompense or stay,
By no faint prayers My favour may be won ;

HOC UNUM CUPIO

Sometimes I spare the sickening life, or slay
The bud that drinks the sun.

I ask not, answer not : I break or bless :
Think not I come to ease or end thy woe :
Think not thy youth so apt for happiness
Moves Me to let thee go.

O Father, that we chide Thee, is it well ?
I suffer, but I did not ask to be :
And if Thou hurry me from hell to hell,
To shake my hold on Thee,

I am Thy child, though wrecked in stormy seas,
Sometime my tears shall Thy compassion
move ;

I can endure Thy bitterest decrees,
If certain of Thy love.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

I USED to think, beneath the shade,
That life was such a simple thing,
There! like that over! deftly played;
How high and clear the plaudits ring!
I used to think that Fortune sent
At times a swift, at times a slow,
You played your best and were content;—
But that was twenty years ago.

I thought that if the wickets flew
Your honest effort made amends;
Your score was blank, but then you drew
Such strength and solace from your friends.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

But now I see from eye to eye
A smile of cynic pleasure go,
They like to see the wickets fly ;—
And did they twenty years ago ?

My comrades vanish from the pitch
With more of failure, less of fame,
And one is spoiled by growing rich,
And one is shadowed by a name.
And those who keep their wickets up
Still shakier, more uncertain grow,
And count less surely on the cup
They hoped for, twenty years ago.

Around the pitch I see a ring
Of ugly faces, wild and wan,
And by the wickets stands a thing
I do not love to think upon.

TWENTY YEARS AGO

My chances are more tamely sent ;
And more depends upon a throw,
The game is somewhat different
From cricket twenty years ago.

And yet we learn, some more, some less,
Beneath the showers, beneath the suns,
That sense and pluck and kindness
Are braver things than getting runs.
And by the old pavilion sits
A simple form I used to know,
Who marks and claps the humblest hits,
Unchanged from twenty years ago.

The ball spins on : young faces wait
To take our place, to join the sport ;
Oh give us leisure, 'tis not late,—
We find the innings all too short ;

TWENTY YEARS AGO

And if the older fellows' play
Is to your thinking somewhat slow,
Leave them their chance : remember, they
Began it twenty years ago.

IN THE IRON CAGE

THE saddest sight! Oh, there are sights and sounds
And thoughts enough in this brief world of ours
To wet with tears the stony face of Time,
Who has seen the suns flame out, the mountains
 piled,
And guesses at the vast designs of God.

What think His angels, as they go and come
On some prodigious errand duly bent,
Whirled in the howling wind, or veiled in cloud,
Or in the shadowy columns of the rain,
To battle with the careless mountain peak
Or rend the forest, or intently charged

IN THE IRON CAGE

With storm and ruin for some innocent vale ?
Care they for human griefs, for lifelong woes ?
And would they stay the hand that strikes the
 blow,

Wipe, if they could, the bitter tears away ?
And do they hide the head and steel the eye,
Too pure to question those permitted wrongs,
Too pitiful to see them and be glad ?

'Twas summer, summer on the pineclad mound,
On the low pastures and the rushing stream,
On the brown ribs of high enormous hills,
And on the cold transparencies of snow.
The great house blinked through all its shuttered
 blinds,

Light happy laughter echoed in the court,
And here and there an eager couple met
With interchange of airy compliment,

IN THE IRON CAGE

Light foot and fluttering vesture :—happy souls
Who live and still are fed, they know not how
Nor why, and mock the easy heaven that gave
And that uneasy doom that waits for all.

Or down the steps a dusty climber came
Reddened and roughened, ripe with early suns,
Attended by a grave and frieze-clad guide :
Here in an arbour, screened by trailing vines.
A group of sturdy Swabians hourly sate ;—
A score of bottles clinked upon the board,
And vapour streamed from many an oozy pipe.
Meanwhile they made unlovely argument
With shrill, insistent voices, of the way
They came, and what the cost of bite and sup.

I laughed and thought the world was well content,
Not beautiful, nor wanting to be wise,

IN THE IRON CAGE

But kind and comely, gay and bountiful ;
Heedless of all it fared so far to see,
The steadfast faces of the monstrous hills,
The far white horns, the black-ribbed precipices,
The good grave thunder of the waterfall
Among his dripping gorges, and the talk
Of streams, and whisper of the tasselled pines.

Meanwhile I viewed, aside the merry din,
An iron cage bedizened and festooned,
That grimly in a sunless corner stood ;
And peering in, amid the shadow, saw
The melancholy brooding yellow eyes
Of a great ruffled bird, that moping sate
With all his seemly feathers staring rough ;
His great claws listlessly involved the perch,
His beak close shut, as in a dismal muse.

IN THE IRON CAGE

Suddenly from the court there broke and blared,
With delicate shiver of the violin,
And the low crooning of the labouring horn,
And piping tremulous flute, a minuet
Penned by a merry master of old time,
Amid the roses in a bower of May,
Thoughtless, and redolent of youth and love ;—
Till all the jovial loiterers drew round
And hushed their prattle, and had thoughts of
heaven.

But those wild eyes dwelt ever on the hills,
Unmoved and unregarding—and a child
That strayed alone came idly to the cage,
And pushed a wondering finger : growing bold
He smoothed the ruffled down, and felt the mail
Of those black horny claws : but when he saw
The sad bird heeded not the young caress,

IN THE IRON CAGE

Grew vexed, and reached, and smote him on the
wing,

So that he staggered sidelong on the perch,
But gript again and never turned his head.

In that dim brain, and dull bewildered sense
He seemed once more to sail aloft the breeze,
To feel the strong sun beating on his wings,
To tread once more the powdered peak, and peer
Through all his cloudy valleys : or beneath
The dripping brow of some o'er-arching rock,
With harsh screams chide his loitering partner
home :

Up to the hills he lifted longing eyes,
And waited for the help that never came ;
Too proud to wonder what had torn him thence,
Too sad to mourn, too strong to be consoled.

WINTER HARVESTS

PIPE, winds of winter,
O'er the hill's cold brow.
Shatter and splinter
The dying, dying bough ;

Brim the icy river,
Let the dead reeds shake ;
Make the wild swan shiver
In her northern lake.

O'er the empty cover
Bid the brown hawk swing,
Send the wailing plover,
Southward to the spring.

WINTER HARVESTS

I do not fear thee,
 Wind, harsh and shrill ;
Rather let me hear thee
 Thunder in the hil

Rude, rough December,
 Thine be all the earth,
So the ruddy ember
 Rustle on the hearth.

When the shadow beckons,
 Home, and bar the door :
Then the poet reckons
 All his summer store ;

Coins his gathered gladness
 Into ringing rhyme,
Hugs his merry madness,
 'Tis his harvest-time.

WASTE

BLIND fate, that broodest over human things,
That through thy long inheritance of tears
Dost bring to birth, through sad and shape-
less years,

One poet, heart and voice : but ere he sings,

Thou dost delight to sever, to estrange,
To bid the restless brain reluctant sleep,
And toss his glories to the common heap,
Waiting thy leisure, and the world's slow change.

As some dishevelled garden, when the frost
Crusts the dry turf, and blunders through the
lines

WASTE

Of summer's green battalions, laying low
The towering lupines that untimely blow ;
And o'er the leaves in rich disorder tossed
The unavailing sun in mockery shines.

STAND ASIDE

STAND aside ! The battle is but beginning,

And the field is wide !

No room for dreamers ! the fight is worth the
winning ;—

Wherefore stand aside !

Hark to the clash of steel, the murderous rattle,

As the ranks divide ;—

Hast thou heart for the fury of the battle ?

Stand aside !

Why ? I know not ; perchance thy leader saw
thee ;—

He was here anon ;—

STAND ASIDE

Thou wert wistfully gazing out before thee,
As the flying spears swept on ;
Thou didst stand, on thy sword a moment leaning,
Was it languor, or fear, or pride ?
Ask not, answer not—Truth ! it needs no
screening ;
Only stand aside !

Rage in thy heart? It comes too late for
mending ;
Rage was best before :
Tears in thine eyes? Good lack, he knows no
bending ;
Hark to the infinite roar !
Thou hast leisure to frame a million reasons ;—
Oh ! but truth is wide :—
This be thy task, as seasons slip to seasons ;
Only stand aside !

STAND ASIDE

Thou wilt hear, on the lonely hillside wending,
 When the fight is done,
Down in the valley the sounds of music blending,
 And the shouts of victory won ;
We fare rudely—and rude will be our laughter ;
 Yours to think and pray !
You will fight, you say, in the long hereafter ;
 Stand aside to-day !

It may be we shall fight again together,
 You will do your part ;—
Give me rather the grave beneath the heather,
 Than the wounds which smart !
You will hover on heights of airy scheming,
 Heights that we ne'er have tried ;—
Ours the slumber without the need of dreaming ;
 Therefore stand aside !

THE POET'S DOOM

I COIN my blood, the poet saith,
My heart, my brain, my very breath,
I purchase livelihood by death.

When throstles sing before the day,
I cannot fling myself away,
And soar upon the soaring lay ;

The sweet impression I must set
In word, in rhyme, ere I forget,
In epigram and epithet ;

I dream beneath the lonely skies,
But must recount my ecstasies
Before a hundred shameless eyes.

THE POET'S DOOM

When generous impulses suggest
Some deed that being hid is blest,
Some noble unregarded quest,

Some selfless, some divine regret,—
It passes ; but I dare not let
The shrinking memory forget.

I pray, I wrestle, but ere long
The fickle fancies round me throng,
And I must mould them into song ;

I dare not keep the words unsaid,
Nor leave the dimness overhead
Unquestioned, or I die unfed.

I cannot simply meditate
On mysteries of force and fate,
But I must e'en anticipate,

THE POET'S DOOM

Must draw a moral e'er the deed
Be ripe, and if the ages bleed
And stagger, I must heal and lead.

Ay, like Medea, I must keep
One eye upon the trackless deep,
And one upon the beast asleep.

For should my charms avail not, he
Will rise and end my melody :
Then what are all my dreams to me ?

I dream my dreams for others' sake ;
My songs not for myself I make ;
What use to give if none will take ?

If song my labouring breast relieved,
'Twas as Cassandra that I grieved,
And as Cassandra none believed.

THE POET'S DOOM

Ah, brothers, 'tis a sorry trade !
Yet e'er I slip to nether shade,
With all the music I have made,

Before the sweet compulsion cease,
I sing, and fain would find release ;
And yet I cannot hold my peace.

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